...and their thoughts range from bullet trains and taxation...

the best of their ideas could be distilled at a countywide level. They are out there every day and their vision may be terribly more realistic than the vision of officials.

The big thing in any idea is to never allow yourself to become proprietary to it to the extent that you say: "My idea is wonderful; it will change the course of history. Let's do it!" If you do that, then you're doomed to failure. There has to be a much broader-based owner of the idea, the stroking and consensus, with each constituency listened to.

Jack Luft, development coordinator, City of Miami Department of Development.

My greatest idea that never happened was a velodrome. In 1974, I had $500,000 invested by people who wanted to build a racetrack for bicycles. Over a period of 15 years, I peddled the idea all the way to Tallahassee and back at one time or another. I wanted to build it in Bicentennial Park. Miami would have been flooded with bicyclists. I can't believe it never got built! (*A velodrome — not Luft's — recently opened at Brian Piccolo Park in Broward County after 10 years of urging and support by bicyclists and bicycle-racing fans.*)

But 1974 was also a good year for an idea of mine. Downtown Coconut Grove was dead just about every night of the week except for a small group of people at the end of Commodore Plaza. I decided the time had come for sidewalk cafes — and got in a big fight with the State of Florida Department of Health. Sidewalk ideas were not my idea, of course. But I was the one who decided something had to happen so we could have them.

Sidewalk cafes were illegal throughout Florida because of the state health code. Food couldn't be served beyond the four walls of a restaurant. It was ridiculous. "The whole civilized world has sidewalk cafes," I said.

The compromise: "If there's an awning on the building to cover the sidewalk cafe," the state said, "we'll call it an *indoor* space." Then I had to coax restaurant owners to put tables and chairs out on Commodore Plaza. Since then the idea has spread.

(*Some current ideas:*)

It hasn't happened yet but I like Bicentennial Park as a place to build great museums on the waterfront, as in Chicago and Boston. (*In exchange for bringing cruise ships to new berths at Bicentennial Park, the seaport would cover most of the cost of museum development and other improvement costs.*)

Watson Island should become the marine boating center of South Florida, a mecca for recreational boating, not just with a display hall to buy and to sell boats but with small marinas and boating clubs, with space for everything from megayachts to small boats.

And Virginia Key should be the watersports capital of the East Coast of the US. There could be an international training center for rowing, canoeing, kayaking, sailing and windsurfing — all the watersports that don't require a motor other than a human body.

At Virginia Key, Miami offers four different marine environments. It's the only place I know of in America that combines all of them. The offshore windsurfing on the ocean side is one of the five best spots in the world, with low waves, because reefs break the waves, and high wind. The Marine Stadium could be enlarged a few hundred meters to provide an Olympic 2,000-meter water sports course.

In the big picture, Miami could become America's premier outdoor city, a marine sports city, a year-around city. There's not another city I know of that would be a better host.

Virginia Key is a pearl waiting to be improved on for these activities.

I think there is every reason to believe that the potential exists in Southeast Overtown, as it also exists in East Little Havana, along the river, to become a major, high-density, high-quality, in-town residential community within the next two or three generations, along the lines of the Back Bay in Boston. You have the mixture of small stores and a blend of cultures, and enclaves in which residents can operate in a progression from one tight-knit neighborhood to another. I can see it in Southeast Overtown Park West, in the area immediately around the Arena.

I can see it; the pulse is there. It's one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city, deteriorated, a shell of its former self that has yet to begin the process of renewal. But there can be neighborhoods of storefronts and townhouses and apartments and public plazas and public spaces that all work together in a positive way.

The next great wave of change and transition is going to come when Cuba opens up. There will be enormous ramifications — social, cultural and international.

I think Miami's going to become something like a Hong Kong. Not in the sense that people are going to be packed together in layers on top of each other, but that when the trade and cultural exchange that's going to occur when Cuba opens is going to position Miami for its next great leap into its destiny as an international city, *if* Miami is poised to take advantage of the international trade and shipping center that it is becoming.

All the pieces are in place. We're approaching the threshold of something enormous. The rest of the world is going to converge on Miami. We're going to be the focal point.

(*Some thoughts on being an "ideas person":*)

For me, I really think it's a product of coming from the Midwest, where the landscape is so austere and featureless — Iowa is corn fields and sky — that you're forced in that kind of sublime environment to create landscapes in your mind. The world seems to be a much bigger

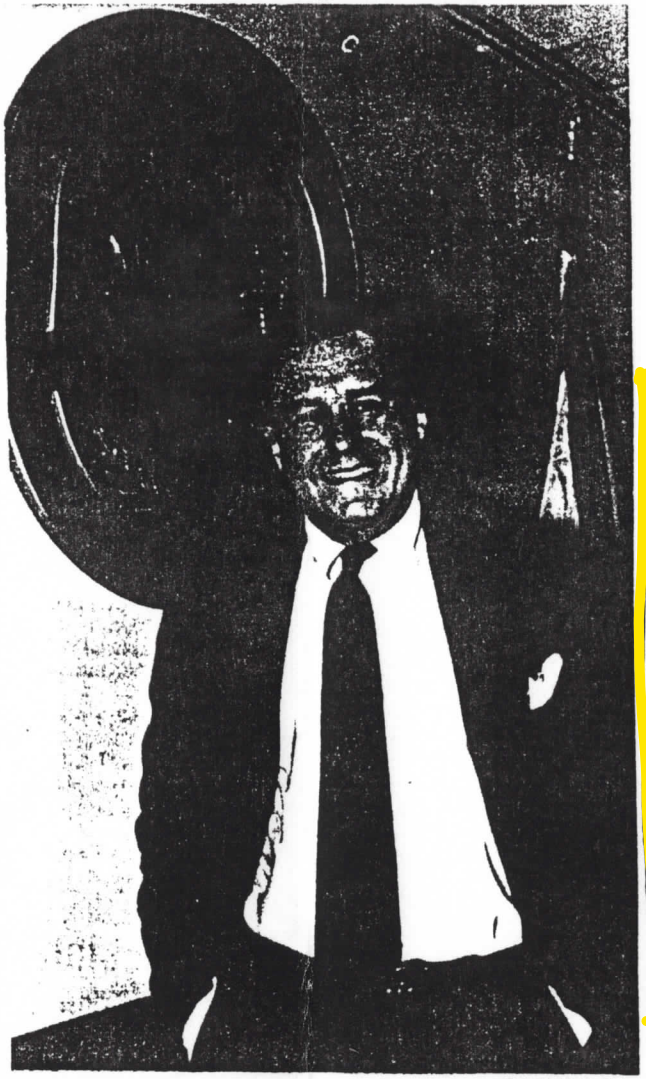

Photo by Maxine Usdan

Maurice Ferre dreams of making Miami a marketplace for ideas.

'Watson Island should become the marine boating center of South Florida'

Jack Luft

Flos Silvestris

Grand Bay is the only ten hotels in America's